

From: CourteMailList
To: CourteMailList
Date: 8/22/2006 9:13 am
Subject: LETTER TO LEGISLATIVE BIG 5 FOR 50 NEW JUDGESHIPs

This message and attachments are being sent on behalf of Presiding Judge Sharon J. Waters

Riverside County Attorneys:

Please - the Riverside County Superior Court needs your assistance in our fight for new judgeships. We need for you to write letters to the state's Big 5 legislators to restore the 50 new judgeships statewide to this fiscal year's state budget. See below for more information on the letters.

As you probably read in last week's newspaper, Riverside County's efforts to get new judgeships and thus obtain much-needed relief for our citizens are once again in jeopardy. The 50 new judgeships statewide -- Riverside was slated to receive seven of them - have been reduced to only 25 statewide.

Background

Two years ago, the Judicial Council, the policy making body for the California judicial branch, made its number one legislative priority to be the addition of 150 judgeships statewide over a three-year period (50 per year). The truth of the matter is the judicial branch should have been asking for over 350 judgeships but chose to submit the more modest proposal of 150 in recognition that there are many other legitimate demands on the state's budget.

After two years of hard work and constant advocacy by the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court, members of the Judicial Council, leaders from the courts and the Bar, the Legislature and the Governor finally agreed to provide funding for 50 judgeships for the 2006-2007 fiscal year. However, before any courts can get these new judges, the positions have to be created legislatively. Senate Bill 56, authored two years ago by Senator Joe Dunn, was the vehicle to create those 50 judicial positions.

Recent Developments

Last week, in an unexpected move and contrary to the agreement previously reached by the legislative leaders in the budget negotiations for FY 2006/07, the Assembly Appropriations Committee has cut the number of judgeships in half and amended SB 56 to provide for only 25 judgeships statewide. The stated reason for this reversal of position is the lack of diversity on the bench and in the Governor's appointments. While the desire for a diverse bench is clearly proper and is the subject of ongoing efforts by the bench and bar, it is not something that can or will be addressed overnight. Meanwhile, our citizens continue to suffer and the Riverside County bench, because of its massive calendars and crushing caseload, is unable to provide even a modicum of justice and certainly not the quality of justice to which our citizens are constitutionally entitled.

Your Action Needed

If you share our concerns, please advise the legislative leaders as quickly as possible. We have prepared and attached a draft letter to them for your convenience. Feel free to make any changes to the letter. It is critical that the 50 judgeships be restored during this session, which ends August 31st, so your quick response is needed. Their city, state, and zip code is - Sacramento, CA 95814. Their individual addresses are:

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, State Capitol Building, First Floor
Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, State Capitol Room 205
Senate Republican Leader Dick Ackerman, State Capitol Room 305
Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez, State Capitol Room 219
Assembly Minority Leader George Plescia, State Capitol Room 3104

Please also send copies of the letter to your legislative representatives (the attached chart lists their names, addresses, and telephone numbers) and also to Kate Howard (she is the Director of the California Administrative Office of the Courts' Office of Governmental Affairs Office in Sacramento). Her address is also on the attached chart.

If you have any questions about the letter, please contact one of our analysts - David Gutknecht (951-955-2875) or Carol Waterhouse-Tejada (951-955-5562).

Thank you very much for your support,
Presiding Judge Sharon J. Waters

Attachments:

Draft Letter to Big 5 Legislative Leaders
Riverside County State Legislator Contact Information